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# THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

## STYLE LOUIS XVI.

BY PAUL ROUAIX.



HE style Louis XVI. came into existence in the midst of the new tendencies of a society moving towards the things of nature and of the fields. The writers indulged in rhapsodies about the "man of the fields." Never before had been seen so many books of which the subjects were idyls or pastorals. The word "sentiment" was coming into fashion.

The works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, of Bernardin de St.-Pierre and of Berquin, which were then given publicity, are important witnesses to the prevailing tendencies and preoccupations of society.

The style Louis XV. had already been modified toward the close. Mme. de Pompadour contributed largely to this return towards quieter and more regular forms.

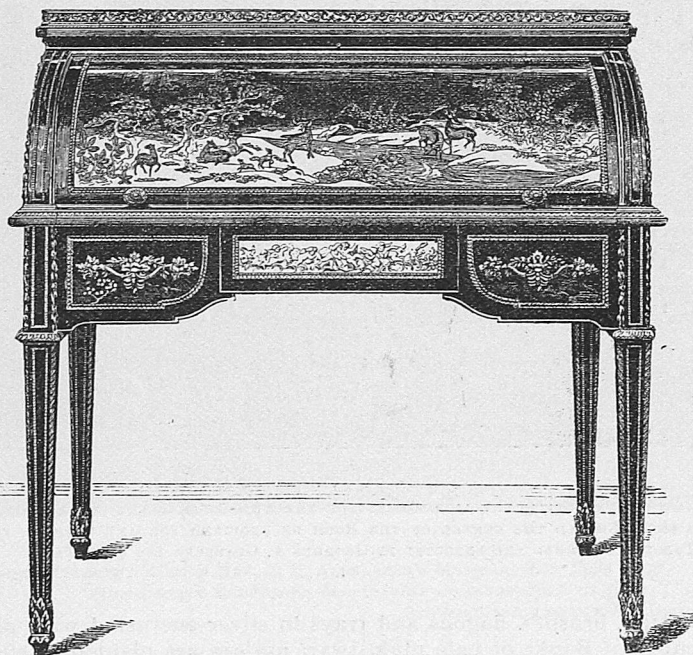
The unearthing of the ruins of Herculaneum and Pompeii, artists' travels in Italy, and the published accounts of them which made the public participant in their results, spread the taste for ancient things; and among them the Ionic order gained the preference. Thus is explained the Neo-Greek spirit which influenced the decorative arts of the time.

The greatest artists of that period were Riesener, the cabinetmaker, and Gouthière, the carver.

The style Louis XVI. is the most easily recognizable of all the decorative styles. Its characteristic expression is that of placid grace, soft, simple and charming.

The straight line prevails in the contours and profiles of the furniture designs; it exists in the legs of the tables and seats, and in upright members generally. Parallels occur at close intervals. The oval is also a favorite form in the vases and medallions of this style.

The general outlines present few projections, and those which do occur are but slight.



BUREAU IN GILT BRONZE AND LACQUER. LOUIS XVI. EPOCH. EXECUTED BY DASSON.

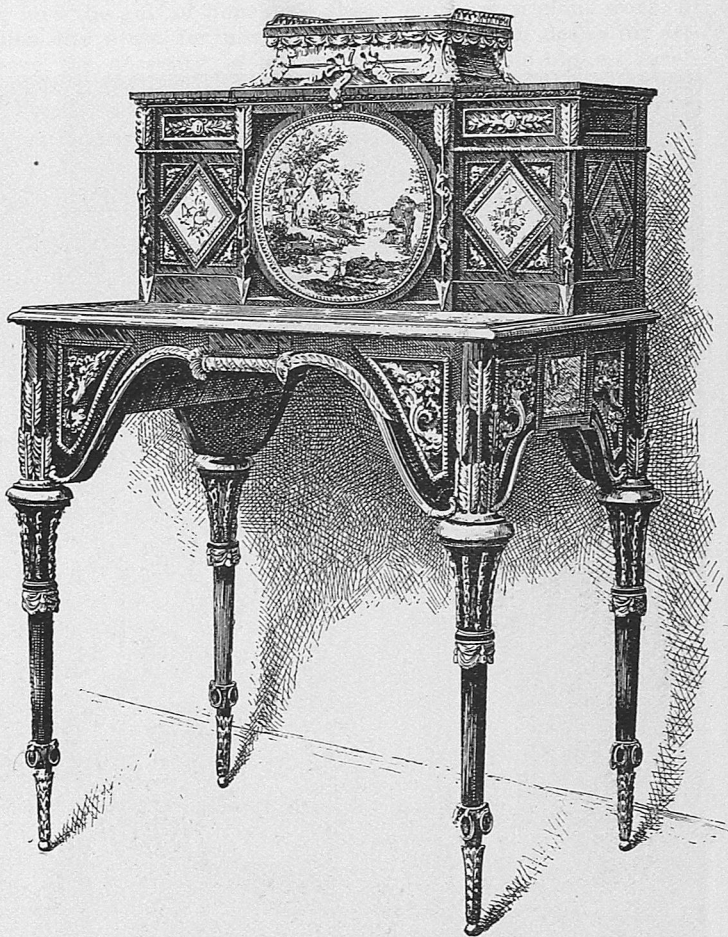
The materials most commonly employed by the style Louis XVI. are white marbles, bronzes covered with a dead velvety gold, woods painted white or in other soft colors, like grey very lightly tinted with green, blue or red. These various tints of grey have been called "céladon." Graceful medallions in marquetry of light colored woods frequently decorate the panels. These medallions, in which baskets of flowers are generally represented, are surrounded by a frame consisting of a narrow egg and dart moulding, which is itself contained within a beaded

member. In the upper part of the medallion a bow of ribbons allows small sheaves of flowers to stray down on each side.

Another characteristic of the style Louis XVI. is the use of porcelain plaques, applied on the face of the furniture. These plaques are round or oval, or, which is most often the case, elongated rectangles.

In textiles, light colors are the most common, as well as those pale tones which suggest a color seen by moonlight; this is particularly the case in those fabrics called "lampas."

The ornamental details which are specially indicative of the style Louis XVI. are: bows of ribbons, pine cones, flowers in clusters, dropping garlands, parallel flutings, egg mouldings,

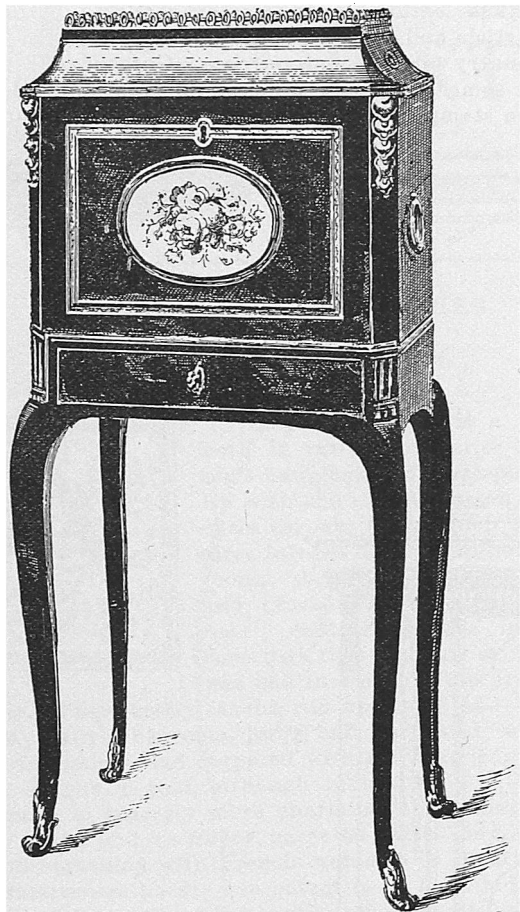


SECRÉTAIRE DECORATED WITH SEVRES PLAQUES AND CHISELED BRONZE. LOUIS XVI. EPOCH.

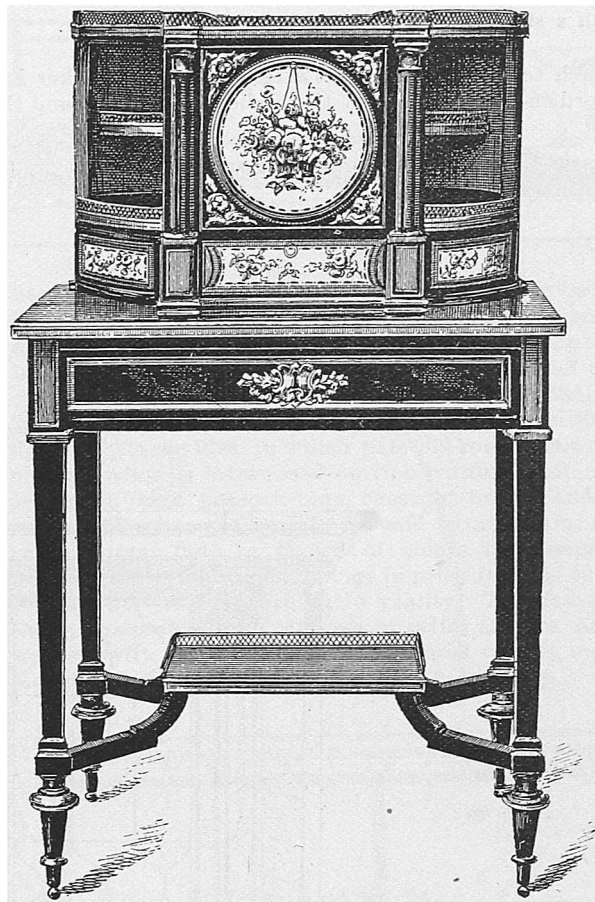
architectural beads and pearls, rural attributes, shepherd's crooks, shepherdess' hats, sickles, sheaves, timbrels, bird cages, Pandean pipes, flutes, thyrses, quivers, torches, lyres, fluted shafts of broken columns, small open work galleries along the top of the furniture, medallions with subjects taken from country life, round, elliptical or oblong in their outlines.

PLASTER decoration was at one time very largely used in England, the work being applied equally to the fretting of ceilings and the construction of mantelpieces. The magnificent ceilings executed during the times of Elizabeth, James and Charles I., in many cases still exist to prove the infinite variety and refinement of the plaster work formerly executed in that country. Of course, much of the plaster work was fashioned by hand, into the most delicate and beautiful ornaments, or cut or kneaded in the mass like sculpture. In former times cast plaster had the defect of having no undercut in the relief, or, if this were attempted, it had to be done separately by means of movable moulds, or set pieces, because the moulds used were inelastic clay, wax, or plaster of Paris. In all things patience and work bring about perfection, and it has remained for modern times to produce relief ornaments from elastic moulds of glue, by means of which work is produced in which great artistic taste is combined with consummate skill in reproduction.





PETIT SECRÉTAIRE IN AMARANTH WOOD, ORNAMENTED WITH A SEVRES PLAQUE. BY PIONNIEZ. (LOUIS XVI. EPOCH.)



BUREAU-SECRÉTAIRE, ORNAMENTED WITH SÈVRES PLAQUES. BY RISSNER. (LOUIS XVI. EPOCH.)



COMMODE IN MAHOGANY, WITH DECORATIONS IN CHISELED COPPER. EXECUTED BY BENEMAN. (LOUIS XVI. EPOCH.)